

EPPING FOREST CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 12 June 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held at the 201 High Road, Loughton at 7.00 pm

Present

Members:

Graeme Smith (Chairman)	
Judith Adams, Epping Forest Heritage Trust	Brian McGhie, Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers
Martin Boyle, Theydon Bois and District Rural	Mark Squire, Open Spaces Society
Jill Carter, Highams Residents Association	Ned Williams (substitute for Andy Irvine), Bushwood Area Residents
Susan Creevy, Loughton Residents Association	Gill James, Friends of Wanstead Parklands
Tim Harris, WREN Wildlife & Conservation Group	Verderer Dr. Joanna Thomas
Robert Levene, Bedford House Community Association	Verderer Michael Chapman DL
Gordon Turpin, Highams Park Planning Group	Verderer Melissa Murphy
	Sylvia Moys
	Carol Pummell, Epping Forest Riders Association
	Caroline Haines

Officers:

Richard Holt	- Town Clerk's Department
Colin Buttery	- Director of Open Spaces
Paul Thomson	- Superintendent, Epping Forest
Jeremy Dagley	- Head of Conservation, Epping Forest
Jacqueline Eggleston	- Head of Visitor Services, Epping Forest
Sally Gadson	- Environmental Stewardship Officer, Epping Forest
Jo Hurst	- Business Manager, Epping Forest
Martin Newnham	- Head Forest Keeper, Epping Forest
Geoff Sinclair	- Head of Operations, Epping Forest

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Deputy Chairman Deputy Phillip Woodhouse, Benjamin Murphy, Mathew Frith (London Wildlife Trust) and Enid Walsh (Open Spaces Society).

The Chairman informed the Committee that further to meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee on the 20th of May 2019 the previous Chairman was now in the role of Deputy Chairman and thanked him for his time as Chairman. The Chairman welcomed Mark Squire to his first meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee.

2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations from Members.

3. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the previous meeting of the Epping Forest Consultative Committee held on 13 February 2019.

Following a question from a Member of the Committee the Director of Open Spaces confirmed that the report on the proposed music event on Wanstead flats would be considered at the meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee in July.

The Chairman informed the Committee that consideration had been given to the use of the term 'resolved' within the minutes and the implications this term gives on the opinion of the Committee.

RESOLVED- That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2019 be approved as an accurate record.

4. **MINUTES OF THE EPPING FOREST AND COMMONS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11TH OF MARCH 2019.**

The Committee received the minutes of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee meeting held on 11th of March 2019.

RESOLVED- That the minutes be noted.

5. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE DECEMBER TO JANUARY 2019**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which provided Members with a summary of the Epping Forest Division's activities across December 2018 to January 2019. The Superintendent of Epping Forest made the following points.

The Superintendent noted the Parklife scheme for the provision of football pitches within Epping Forest and commented on the recent report produced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport on the positive effect sports like football can have on the wellbeing of those taking part. Replying to a query from a Member of the Committee the Superintendent confirmed that the new pitches which would be involved in the Parklife scheme, if funding is secured, would be artificial grass pitches which allows evening play and cheaper maintenance. Further to this the Superintendent confirmed that with the diminished Epping Forest space required for football pitches the areas available could be used for conservation maintenance. In addition, it was noted that the Parklife funding would only be secured if the City of London Corporation matched the external funding.

The Superintendent informed Members that an Operational Property Review was considered by the relevant Committees including the Epping Forest &

Commons Committee in May. It was noted that a bid had been received for a property on the Woodredon Estate.

The Superintendent informed the Committee that there had been one hundred and thirteen instances of fly tipping in the period covered by the update with a hundred taking place in 2019. The Superintendent explained that the improved car park security and regular night-time closure of car parks in the area had been very effective in limiting the number of fly tipping incidents at Wanstead Flats. In addition, it was confirmed that, under the new powers in the 2018 Open Spaces act, the City of London Corporation had crushed a van involved in fly tipping within Epping Forest.

The Superintendent confirmed that Epping Forest Conservation team had engaged extensively with the Epping local plan with £55,000 having been already been spent on the process. The Head of Conversation at Epping Forest noted national scientific importance of the Forest including the prevalence of ancient trees. In addition, it was confirmed that no further planning permission applications had been received with the exception of the £4.4M works on the Suntrap Centre. Moreover, the Superintendent clarified that the Epping Forest team would be working with the City Surveyor's department on the Wanstead Park Ponds project.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

6. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE FEBRUARY TO MARCH 2019**

The Committee received a report of the Superintendent of Epping Forest which provided Members with a summary of the Epping Forest Division's activities across February to March 2019. The Superintendent of Epping Forest made the following points.

The Superintendent informed the Committee that, following the reopening of the Epping Forest visitor centre, visitor numbers had increased. In addition, the success of the May Fayre event was noted, and number of presentations were provided on the history of the Forest. Following a question from a Member of the Committee the Superintendent confirmed that the Epping Forest and Commons Committee would be considering a report on the proposed music event at Wanstead Flats in July.

A Member of the Committee questioned if the results of the public consultation regarding the Woodford poplar had been considered. The Head of Operations in the Epping Forest team informed the Committee that at a recent meeting with local stakeholders they had explained the reasons for the works on the trees. Further to this the Head of Operations confirmed that stakeholders from both sides of Woodford Green had been engaged and invited the Committee to inform of any further groups or individuals who could be contacted. In addition, it was explained that no final decisions, on the species of trees which were to replace the trees currently in place, had been reached and that the consultation period would conclude at the end of June.

Replying to a Member's question the Superintendent confirmed that the work on the Deer Strategy would be to establish a proposed strategy to be considered by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee in due course.

The Superintendent confirmed that the Epping Forest Management plan would be received by the Epping Forest Consultative Committee in October.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

7. FUNDAMENTAL REVIEW

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the City of London Corporation's Fundamental Review process and its impact on the funds which resource the Epping Forest management budgets. The Director of Open Spaces provided the Consultative Committee with the background to the City of London Corporation's Fundamental Review process including the increasing financial pressures on the City of London Corporation. It was explained the City Corporation's need to save £30 Million by 2020/21 would require an increased degree of financial discipline.

A Member of the Committee noted the £2.4 billion which had been reserved for expenditure on the various Capital Projects and commented that the level of expenditure on the City of London Corporation managed open spaces, particularly Epping Forest, should be increased considering its importance. The Chairman agreed with this point explaining that he had been, and would continue to be, a vocal proponent of the importance of the City of London Corporation's open spaces.

A Member of the Committee noted the work by the City of London Officers on engagement with the various local development plans to defend forest land and questioned what the future plans were for this work considering the impact of the Fundamental Review. The Director of Open Spaces confirmed that there was a commitment to the 'to shape outstanding environments' within the Corporate Plan and commented on the quality work which had been completed to defend open spaces.

The Superintendent, replying to a question from a Member of the Committee, noted that a strong case would be made to defend the key capital expenditure in Epping Forest. A Member commented that they felt the Committee expressed a strong commitment to greater expenditure from the City of London Corporation at Epping Forest.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

8. HIGHAMS PARK- LITTLE SALE WOOD AND OAK HILL WOOD INDIVIDUAL SITE PLAN

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the Individual Site Plan (ISP) for Highams Park, Little Sale Wood and Oak Hill Wood. Head of Operations in the Epping Forest team introduced the report and provided the Committee with summary of the central issues of for the Site Plans

including the property management issues and significant management considerations.

Replying to a question from a Member of the Committee the Head of Operations confirmed that the Management Strategy within the report provided a broad indication of the direction of travel with further detail provided in appendixes.

Replying to a Committee Member's request, the Head of Operations informed the Committee that the organisations listed within the report will be contacted as part of a consultation process relating to the ISP's.

A Member of the Committee asked if any final decision had been reached on the structure of the path which will be used at Highams Park. The Head of Operations confirmed that no final decisions had been made with regard to the path at Highams Park and that a paths policy was in development. In addition, it was confirmed that various options would be explored noting that the engagement with London Borough of Waltham Forest and funding would be key issues in shaping this policy.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

9. **DEER SANCTUARY, THEYDON BOIS - CONSERVATION STATEMENT**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the draft Conservation Statement for the heritage landscape of Birch Hall Park Sanctuary also known as the Epping Forest Deer Sanctuary. The Superintendent explained that a scoping report would confirm the depth of the lake present at the site and that the cost of deer management would be explored as part of the Deer Management strategy.

Replying to a question from a Member of the Committee the Superintendent confirmed that the '112 acres' should be corrected to '112,000 acres'.

A Member of the Committee commented that there were significant natural assets at the site in addition to deer. Replying to this the Superintendent explained that these assets would be considered as part of the Conservation Statement at Birch Hall Park Sanctuary.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

10. **2019 COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP GRANT APPLICATION**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the 2019 Countryside Stewardship Grant application. The Head of Conservation introduced the report and highlighted the work of their colleague the Environmental Stewardship Officer. In addition, the approval timeline was explained to the Committee noting that a report on the Countryside Stewardship Grant would be considered at the July meeting of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

Replying to a query from a Committee member on the definition of ancient trees the head of conservation explained that the Ancient Tree Forum defined them as a tree “that has passed beyond maturity and is old, or aged, in comparison with other trees of the same species”. It was added that ‘veteran’ trees are younger than ‘ancient’ trees which are those who are older than the standard species average.

In response to a Committee Member’s question regarding pollarding, the Head of Conservation explained that Hornbeams can be pollard dependent on size, that Beeches cannot be pollard and that a survey on the logistics of Sycamore management was being considered.

RESOLVED - *With two hours having elapsed since the start of the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order No. 40 the Committee agreed at this point to extend the meeting by up to thirty minutes.*

Replying to a Member’s comment on the changing pressures on Epping Forest the Head of Conservation explained that a balance of new and old trees would be sought to achieve a carbon balance. In addition, the Environmental Stewardship Officer noted that the maps appended to the report would be update when appropriate work had taken place.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

11. **EPPING FOREST BUFFER LANDS – ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS REVIEW FOR 2018 AND PROPOSALS FOR 2019**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Open Spaces on the main agricultural land management activities completed in 2018 – 19.

RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

12. **QUESTIONS**

The Committee received three questions.

A Committee Member asked if tree tags were reused as they had noticed trees with same number attached. The Superintendent confirmed that the numbers used to tag trees were sequential and therefore were not reused.

The size of the font used on the signs within the Forest was highlighted by a Committee Member, who commented that the it was too small to be easily viewable. The Head of Visitor Services explained that current branding for the forest signs would be kept but noted that the scaling of the signs would be assessed for usability.

Following a question from a Member of the Committee it was a confirmed that the construction lorries noted were due to works at Bluebell Wood which was not within Epping Forest land.

13. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Epping Forest business manager provided the Committee with a brief summary of the upcoming process for the election of Verderers and highlighted that further details on the were available on the website.

The meeting closed at 9.12 pm

Chairman

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